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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: KARBALA ISF COMMANDER SHOWN THE DOOR

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3165 B. BAGHDAD 2967 C. BAGHDAD 3052
[1](#)D. BAGHDAD 3324

Classified By: Karbala PRT Leader Don Cooke

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Karbala ISF commander MG Ra'ad Shaker Jawdat al-Hasnawi, whose ouster by Governor Aqeel Mahmoud al-Khazali on September 22 was reversed days later by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, has been shown the door. He departed Karbala in mid-October following Aqeel's survival of a no-confidence vote in the Provincial Council and now is in Baghdad. Sacking Ra'ad is an apparent attempt by Maliki to unify Karbala's Da'wa Party in the run-up to the provincial elections. The Ra'ad affair has raised concerns about the possibility of renewed political violence here. The PRT continues to stress the importance of peaceful resolution of political disputes. End Summary.

Governor Prevails, At a Cost

[1](#)2. (C) Governor Aqeel has succeeded in showing Da'wa Party rival provincial ISF commander MG Ra'ad the door. According to provincial police and government contacts, Prime Minister Maliki--who some insist initiated the move to oust Ra'ad--was surprised at the negative reaction among Karbalans to the announcement on September 22 that the provincial ISF commander would be transferred to serve as IP chief in Diyala (ref A). Anti-Da'wa members of the Provincial Council (PC) were quick to pounce on the controversy. Already angered by Aqeel's establishment of Tribal Support Councils (ref B)--viewing them as an attempt by Da'wa to usurp the PC's authority--they called for a vote of no-confidence in the Governor.

[1](#)3. (C) Aqeel survived the October 16 vote, but only just. He received one vote more than the one-third required to prevent him from being impeached. Local government contacts report that, although Aqeel was politically damaged, he earned grudging respect from PC opponents for handling the crisis with grace and aplomb, repeatedly offering to meet and compromise with no preconditions. The same contacts speculate that, in "taking one for the (Da'wa) team," the Governor--who most believe is finished insofar as his provincial political prospects are concerned--may be rewarded by the Prime Minister with a national-level sinecure. The Price of Loyalty

[1](#)4. (C) As we reported previously (ref C), Ra'ad's take-no-prisoners style and penchant for self-promotion apparently were viewed as liabilities by Aqeel and Maliki in the run-up to provincial elections. Urban business contacts have told us that, while they credit Ra'ad and his protege, MAJ Ali Hamid Hashim, with having quashed the violence and chaos that reigned here little more than one year ago, they regard the heavy-handed security regime--especially the many checkpoints snarling traffic here--as a serious impediment to economic progress. Farmers, particularly in the former Sadrist strongholds of Husayniyah Qadah and Hindiyah Qadah, have been the most vocal in complaining of abuse at the hands of over-zealous police.

[1](#)5. (C) Personal as well as political animus fueled the move to oust Ra'ad. Aqeel and Ra'ad led competing Da'wa factions,

producing a schism that a variety of contacts here say Maliki sought to close before it could turn into a liability at the polls. While Ra'ad--himself formerly close to Maliki (both men hail from Hindiyah Qadah)--apparently rankled the Prime Minister through his self-aggrandizement and less-than-discreet flirtations with both ISCI and Fadhilah, Aqeel worked quietly to win Maliki's trust through unstinting devotion to the Prime Minister and his vision for Da'wa, a demonstration of loyalty that nearly cost him his job. Ra'ad currently is in Baghdad performing unspecified duties, according to U.S. military officers. The same officers report that MAJ Ali--whose sister is Maliki's wife--wanted to go with Ra'ad but decided to stay when told he would be promoted to colonel and given command of an "anti-terror" brigade here.

Comment

16. (C) The Ra'ad affair has revealed an apparent attempt by Maliki--supported by his protege, Aqeel--to unify Karbala's Da'wa Party in the run-up to the provincial elections. It also has raised the specter of renewed political violence here. Karbalans who attributed a string of a least five small explosions to intra-Da'wa fighting preceding the provincial ISF commander's ouster now speculate that Da'wa's opponents--having failed to impeach the governor--may initiate similar attacks aimed at discrediting Karbala's Da'wa-dominated administration. The PRT continues to stress the importance of peaceful resolution of political disputes.

End Comment.

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